

A Glossary of Good Beginnings

1. Interesting description. Ashes filled the air when I was around the camp fire. Crackle, crackle it went.

2. Sound. Boom! The trunk slammed. Bang! The car doors slammed as we got out of the van.

3. The past in the present. It is April 10, 1912. The Titanic is going to travel all the way from England to America.

4. Exclamation. Yeah! We're going to Disneyland tomorrow! Yeah!" I yelled about as loud as I could.

5. A thought. I'm in big trouble now, I thought to myself.

6. A complaint. It seems like we never go swimming at Fife pool!

7. A surprise. Wow! I was doing my back hand-spring and I landed it!

8. A question. Have you ever been an Editor-in-Chief? Well I'll tell you, it's a big job!

9. Sound, repetition, and simile. Screech, screech, screech! The first time we tried to play the recorders it sounded like a lion running his claws down a chalkboard.

10. Exclamation, repetition, strong feelings. Chores! Chores! Chores! Chores are boring! Scrubbing toilets, cleaning sinks, and washing bathtubs take up a lot of my time and are not fun at all.

11. Extremely strong feelings. The very first time I saw asparagus I hated it. I had never even tried it before and I still hated it!

12. A series of questions. Touch of the flu? Egg in her hair? Poor Ramona!

13. Scary, exciting, or intense moment. ... I tried to run, but I couldn't. The monster seemed like it was growing by the minute! And then, the most horrible thing was about to happen — I screamed and sat bolt upright in bed. I gasped swallowing huge amounts of air.

14. Main idea. I will always love my grandparents' beach house. The way the waves role over the gooeey sand and the way the sand weaves in between your toes. The way we pick up barnacle-covered rocks and watch the sand crabs scurry away. The way we dig for clams and end up knee deep in the never ending sand.

15. Something interesting to come. It all started on an average day. I didn't think anything unusual was going to happen, but boy was I wrong!

16. Conversation. "We're moving." That's what she told me. I couldn't believe it! I had just made the basketball team and was making more friends. "What!" I exclaimed.

17. Reveal something unusual. "Company halt!" yelled the drill master. My mom stopped and went into position. Her dog tags clinked as she moved.

18. An unsettling description. A flash of lightning illuminates the harsh emptiness of the night. In an orphanage children cry mournfully. They are starving.

19. Unusual image of a character. Simon Wilken was snacking down on a plum with great gusto.

20. Anecdote. On a dark December night in 1776, as he led a barefoot brigade of ragged revolutionaries across the icy Delaware River, George Washington said, "Shift your fat behind, Harry. But slowly or you'll swamp the darn boat."

21. Describe the setting. The deafening crowd was packed into the Kingdome on the sold-out Buhner Buzz-Cut Night. Hundreds of people were outfitted in brand new buzz-cuts and were enjoying the Mariner game.

22. Address the audience. You walk into the dentist's office. You sit down. You try to read a magazine. But it's no use. You're scared and there's nothing you can do about it.

23. "Show" feelings. I sat in my desk, sweat dripping down my face. I shut my eyes tight, then opened them. I looked at my watch, 11:27. Three minutes! Three minutes until I heard a sound, a sound that would set me free for three months of total nothingness.

24. Comic story. "Oh my God!" I exclaimed, "What's John doing out there? Why is he on his hands and knees, Mom?" I looked out the big kitchen window wondering if my eight-year old brother was all right. He was looking distressed. Then he threw up.

25. Challenge the reader. Colin Greer, the President of the New World Foundation, a civil rights organization in New York, has something to say about your character.

26. Focus on something important. In my old, battered, black wallet I carry many things. A letter from a friend. My lunch ticket. My social security card. Many other tidbits and items as well. There is one thing however, which I prize above all my possessions. It is a photograph.

27. A list. The sweat on your brow. A layer of dust on your face. Out in the woods. Somewhere. And on a horse. Of all the places in the world, I feel best on a horse.

28. A scenario. Right now I want you to pretend you are in a store. As you walk around, you see that some products are much more inexpensive. Now, look at the labels on these cheaper items. You will probably notice that many of these labels say, "Made in China," or "Made in Honduras." Have you ever stopped to wonder why products made in these countries are so much more affordable than the things manufactured right here on American soil?

29. Fantasy or fairy tale-type language. In yesteryear, when Moby Dick was just a tadpole, and the seas rolled and thundered over the jetties and onto the shore, I searched for my first sand dollar still hidden somewhere in the ever stretching Long Beach Peninsula.

30. Simple action to complex realization. I walk up the hill with my friends, then turn into our cul-de-sac, go to the front door, put the key in the lock, turn, and step in. The house breathes a kind of spooky hello as I set my books down and go to the kitchen where the inevitable note is waiting: "Have a snack. Be home soon. I love you."

31. Startling statement. A great crime was committed against a people in 1942. This was the signing of Executive Order 9066 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, which called for the eviction and internment of all Japanese Americans.

32. Thesis. Education is a key element in developing the skills necessary for a successful life. Too often, students are more involved earning a paycheck than spending time on their academic studies. Students need to realize that their high school classes will prepare them for a brighter future.

33. Something outlandish. I am a dynamic figure, often seen scaling walls and crushing ice. I have been known to remodel train stations on my lunch breaks, making them more efficient in the area of heat retention. I write award-winning operas. I manage time efficiently. Occasionally, I tread water for three days in a row.

34. Fast action. I raced inside, slamming the front door behind me. I plopped my backpack on the floor and dashed for the kitchen. Our cat, asleep in the hallway, quickly awoke and scurried out of harms way. I knew I only had a few precious seconds before my brother, coming in through the back door, beat me to the kitchen and nabbed the last of mom's brownies.

35. A saying. It was Ralph Waldo Emerson who said that "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of simple minds." He said it almost 200 years ago, but perhaps it bears repeating today to our senators and congressman who act as though our country can continue to spend money it does not have.